

The Ballarat Naturalist

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Excursion to

Limeburners Bay and Geelong Botanic Gardens 7th March 2021

Thirteen field nats met at the service centre on the Geelong Ring Rd. We travelled in convoy to Limeburners Bay, a broad and sandy estuarine inlet where Hovells Creek flows into Corio Bay on the northern edge of Geelong.

Limeburners Lagoon State Nature Reserve runs along Hovells Creek and is managed by Parks Victoria.

Sugar Gums were planted many years ago. Later plantings

have been indigenous species of eucalypts, casuarinas, wattles, banksia and salt bush and they greatly improve the habitat for fauna.



From the car park we could see a gathering of Little Pied and Little Black Cormorants. We headed north along a sealed path. The path was busy with pedestrians and cyclists.

On the muddy edges there were few birds – White-faced Heron, Masked Lapwing and Grey Teal. A large flock of Black Swans were resting in a shallow area. Near the mangroves two Pied Oystercatchers and White Ibis were feeding and a Little Heron was catching small fish (see p.1).



Black Swan	Little Egret	Red Wattlebird
Grey Teal	Australian White Ibis	New Holland Honeyeater
Chestnut Teal	Pied Oystercatcher	Australian Magpie
Little Pied Cormorant	Masked Lapwing	Willie Wagtail
Little Black Cormorant	Silver Gull	Magpie-lark
White-faced Heron	Superb Fairy-wren	Common Starling
Galah	White-plumed Honeyeater	





Off the main track we headed into a salt marsh area. Succulent, fleshy plants growing here were: short Beaded Glasswort *Salicornia quinqueflora* subsp. *quinqueflora*, Shrubby Glasswort *Tecticornia arbuscula* (1m high) and Karkalla

or native pigface, *Carpobrotus rossii*.

Along the board walk in wetter soil, Grey Mangrove *Avicennia marina* subsp. *australasica* were flowering. This is one of the few populations in Port Phillip Bay.

The aerial roots (pictured below) which carry oxygen into the roots were seen. Webs of many leaf-curling spiders (*Phonognatha graeffei*) and some orb-weavers (Family Araneidae) were seen in the mangroves.



There's more pictures and information about this excursion on our website.
Visit: <https://fieldnatballarat.wordpress.com/>

Heavy traffic along the esplanade resulted in slow travelling and split the convoy on the drive to Geelong Botanic Garden. Mobile phones were handy and eventually everyone arrived at the Geelong Botanic Garden for lunch. At the entrance to the gardens we met a Friends of the Gardens guide for a garden tour. She led us to many of the interesting plants in the gardens and explained the history of the garden. The Geelong Botanic Garden were started in 1851 (7 years before the Ballarat garden). Many of the trees planted in the early days of the gardens are still in excellent condition. The gardens have been extended over the years with new sections adding to the variety of plants on display.

John Gregurke



Mole cricket (family Gryllotalpidae)
found on the path to Limeburner's Lagoon

Photos provided by Val Hocking, Geoff Howard, and Susan Kruss



International Dark Sky Week

It may seem harmless, but light pollution has far-reaching consequences that are harmful to all living things. Effective outdoor lighting reduces light pollution, leading to a better quality of life for all. The dark sky movement is working to bring better lighting to communities around the world so that all life can thrive.

That's why there are some exciting things happening at Ballarat's Municipal Observatory & Museum from April 5 to 12, including family-friendly sessions, a competition with great prizes, and on Thursday evening April 8th from 7.45 pm, a special insect light. Join us at the Observatory - bookings essential, small donation.

Details and booking link on <https://ballaratobservatory.org.au/event/international-dark-sky-week-competition/>

Member's Images Presentations from March Meeting

Claire and Peter chose to interpret "Pathways" in a straightforward approach as a route from a starting place to a destination. We chose pictures from the Kimberley area and included some plants, birds or wildlife encountered

along the pathways such as a Great bower bird, Johnstone River crocodile, rainbow bee-eater, a screw palm, Kimberley rose and Livistona palms.

A number of locations were along the Gibb River Road in north-west Western Australia. Some pathways were roads, such as those leading into Purnululu National Park (Bungle Bungles), some were walking tracks including the walks into Echidna Chasm, Emma Gorge, Windjana Gorge and on Mornington Station. A few involved water crossings or even wading 750 metres in



Tunnel Creek or using a rope pulley to propel a boat across a river into Manning Gorge or canoe along the Fitzroy River in Mornington.



We concluded with a pathway to the moon picture. We were not in Broome at the right time but gained an idea of the spectacle in Exmouth, when for a short time the moon shines a path onto low tidal flats.

*Claire & Peter
Dalman*

Kimberley Rose *Brachychiton viscidulus*

Member's Images Presentations from March Meeting

Disappearing Pathways by Carol Hall

My presentation concerned the decrease and probable loss of summer sea ice in the Arctic due to global warming. Ice floes are essential for creatures to haul out and rest, including seals which form the prime food for polar bears. Both seal pups and adults provide rich, nourishing food for bears, maintaining their ability to reproduce successfully. Bears stranded on land make do with sparse vegetation, resulting in weight loss and higher cub mortality. Since satellite photography began in 1979, summer ice extent has shrunk by 3% per decade; the rate of decline is increasing and it is possible that by 2050 the Arctic Ocean will be ice-free in summer.



Members pres—Emily

The Rat Nats—Juniors Group

On a wet Sunday morning, two intrepid Juniors headed for the bush to seek bark. We looked at a variety of trees and found that different trees had different bark, and in different patterns.

We found that lots of creatures use bark for shelter or hunting. We also found out that bark helps trees stay upright and protects them from cold, wet, heat, fire and infection. The best thing was collecting some bark (from the ground) and getting creative covering our tree pictures with real bark!



Audrey adding bark to her trees.

Leon getting up close and personal to some mating crane flies



Membership Renewal Reminder

Membership fees are now due covering the next 12 months. Your contribution allows us to provide *The Ballarat Naturalist* in full colour every month. As a member you are invited to attend meetings and excursions, as well as vote at General Meetings. You also have access to a library of books and other resources.

Members presentatoints....

Club Meeting Minutes March 5, 2021

Opening and Apologies

President Bill welcomed 17 members and one visitor.

Apologies: John Petheram, Geoff Howard, Shirley Faull, Mark Moravec, Fiona McPhie, Paul Norquay, Elspeth Swan, Bill Murphy, Stephanie Davison, Doug Wilson, John Mildren, Graeme Lunt and Vireya Jacquard.

Minutes of the previous Meeting

Motion: that the Minutes of the previous Meeting (Feb. 5, 2021) be accepted as a true and correct record.

Moved: C. Hall

Seconded: P.

Dalman

Carried.

Emily to send Chris and Anna a card thanking them for their many years of participation in Club activities and wishing them well. Done.

Renew Club membership with the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria (FNCV): Done.

John G contacted Bernie Blood from City of Ballarat on 18 February 2021 to discuss various options relating to the wellbeing of Black Swans and other waterbirds at Lake Wendouree and learnt the following information:

- Habitat areas of water milfoil (as suggested by FNCB and BirdLife Ballarat in 2017) that aren't cut by the harvesters are:

East Fairyland opposite the end of St Aiden's Drive

North-east corner of lake at end of Martin St.

West of yacht club near end of Mair St.

These areas have happily not resulted in complaints from local residents who previously complained of "untidiness".

- Grass around the lake and the area from the POW memorial to Gillies St is being cut at a higher level (60mm cf 30mm previously). This seems to be reducing the number of swans moving across roads.

John thinks that the steps above are a reasonable attempt to maintain the Lake as suitable habitat for swans and other waterfowl at Lake Wendouree.

City of Ballarat councillors have however made a decision to maintain the water level at 100mm over full. This means any weed growth left in the lake is 100mm deeper and muddy edges (such an important foraging area for many species) are reduced in the centre reed bed. This decision also results in water flooding over the pathways near the edge of the lake, resulting in damage to granitic sand paths. After discussing whether FNCB should lobby Councillors to reconsider this ill-conceived decision, most probably made to increase water depth for yachting and rowing, it was agreed that John would draft a letter and circulate it to

Business Arising from Correspondence:

- The offer of a personalised engagement session to FNCB members from Alison Breach, the Hepburn Shire Council's Project Manager for the Creswick Trails Project (CTP) was discussed. It was received after Bill E had responded to a generic letter about engagement and the project moving forward with a stern letter to Alison about the legitimacy of the "engagement", having received no specific responses to any feedback provided/ recommendations/ concerns so far raised particularly regarding trail alignments. Alison affirmed that the documents submitted by our Club had been fed in to the various consultants research and reporting, and suggested that a face-to-face meeting could focus particularly on how our Club's feedback was used by consultants as they undertook research and prepared their various reports for the project development stage of the CTP, and ultimately informed and impacted the design for Stage One of the Creswick Trails. Bill will let members know when such a meeting is planned and invite participation.
- Bill explained the background to the opportunity for our Club to assist with a National Science Week fungi-related event in August in partnership with the Haddon Community Learning Centre, for which the Centre is seeking grant funding. Several members expressed interest in being involved.
- Annual renewal of Club membership with the South East Australian Naturalists Association (SEANA) is due: \$20.

Motion: That our Club's membership with SEANA be renewed.

Moved: C. Dalman

Seconded: A. Arnold

Carried.

SEANA's AGM is to be held at the SEANA Autumn Camp to be hosted by Hamilton in April. Of those members attending the camp, Val agreed to represent FNCB at the SEANA AGM, with support from the Dalmans.

Annual renewal of membership with Friends of Canadian Corridor (FoCC) due: \$20.

Motion: That our Club's membership with FoCC be renewed.

Moved: A. Arnold

Seconded: F. Hanrahan

Carried.

Reports:

Treasurer's Report

Opening bal: \$9,427.27

Income \$418.00

Expenses \$515.00

Closing bal: \$9,330.27 (including \$1287.89 CEP grant funds)

Motion: that the Treasurer's Report be accepted and invoices tabled be approved for payment.

Moved: K. Elder

Seconded: J. Morrish

Carried.

'Rat Nat's update. Two youngsters attended the last wander around at Stringybark to enjoy the bush, with the highlight being the Jewel Spider found in exactly the same spot as it was found during the previous month's excursion.

Bill has also created a Rat Nat's project page in iNaturalist.

Communities Environment Program grant update- "Community-based Environmental Recording". The current focus of attention for resourcing is an appropriate database for Club records and photos at various locations. The Photomon App. developed by a government department in Geraldton WA is the current front-runner, with a three-month trial period just secured.

SEANA Spring Camp (Oct. 22-24) Planning: please keep your eyes and ears open for potential speakers/ field trips/ catering for dinners and evening meeting venues (for up to 80 people potentially). Val will look into some options for venues and would welcome suggestions.

John G initiated a discussion about future meeting venues. He suggested that the Ballarat North Senior Citizens Hall is one option for which he has contacted the coordinator to find out more details. Miner's Rest Hall also has lots of virtues, including \$20/night fee (cheap!). We'll make a decision when we have more details about the various options, but will aim to hold the May Club Meeting in a more central location in Ballarat.

Show & Tell/ Field Reports

Carol reported the daily presence of a Nankeen Night-heron in the top pond of the North Gardens Wetland happily posing for photos. (see separate report p.15)

Juvenile White-bellied Sea-eagle at Lal Lal Falls seen on the BirdLife Ballarat excursion last weekend.

Andy spotted a Yellow Admiral Butterfly in his Alfredton garden in mid-February.

Roger brought in a sample of manna from the flowering Manna Gums *Eucalyptus viminalis* in Bannockburn Bush Nature Reserve, recommending that we taste a piece.

Bill found a leg ring from a (presumably racing) pigeon.

Peter N. found a wonderful web of interlinked Jewel Spider webs gleaming in the sun at Happy Valley Reservoir in Argyle Rd.

Syllabus Item: “Members’ Images- Pathways”.

Six members gave short presentations with the usual wide variation in interpretation of the theme.

Bill thanked Peter N for his IT support for the presenters.

See separate Reports for more...

Next Meeting: Speaker and topic to be confirmed

When? Friday May 7th, 2021, 7.30pm

venue to be confirmed.

Please note: there will not be a Club Meeting in April due to Easter.

What a Treat - Indeed!

This from a recent email:

“Thanks John for prompting Roger to tell us about his discovery of Austral Ladies Tresses at a BEN reserve. I went looking for them after our field trip on Feb. 6 and was fortunate to be photographing a plant when this lovely Golden-browed Resin Bee arrived to climb the spiral staircase. It was the first time I’d seen this orchid in real life. What a treat!”

Emily”



Golden-browed Resin Bee *Megachile aurifrons*
on Austral Ladies Tresses *Spiranthes australis*



Field reports

In the last couple of weeks I have seen a Nankeen Night Heron in the top pond of the North Gardens Wetland between 4pm-6pm. It is a non-breeding adult judging by the lack of any white plume on the back of the head. It was not fazed by passers-by on the adjacent footpath and eventually flew past me at about 1m distance to search for food in the nearby overflow channel.
Carol Hall



Excursions and Meetings in 2021 - Fill your Diary!

Apr 2 no club meeting - Good Friday.

Apr 9 Extraordinary Meeting—the Committee will be planning Spring SEANA Camp as FNCB is host.

Apr 11 Excursion - Insect and Orchid Hunt visiting Brewery Dam in Smythesdale, *Stringybark* in Scarsdale and *Lilwarre* at Monkey Gully.

Apr 16-18 SEANA Autumn Camp at Hamilton

May 7 Club meeting to be held at Ballarat North Senior Citizens clubrooms,

Speaker = Interactions with Nature—John Lenagan from ANG AIR

May 8 (SAT) Creswick State Forest waterways and other beauty spots, led by Susan Lawrence and John Petheram

For April's excursion, meet at 9.30 am at Gillies St car park to travel in convoy. Alternatively, meet at Brewery Dam in Smythesdale at 10.00am.

There are currently no number limits for excursions, however health restrictions still apply, so please bring a mask and keep distance of 1.5 m between people. Of course, if you are not well or suffering any flu-like symptoms, please stay at home.

Committee

President	Bill Elder
Secretary	Emily Noble
Treasurer	Kathy Elder
	Andy Arnold
	Bernadette Cheeseman
	Val Hocking
	Graeme Lunt
	John Petheram

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Meetings - due to COVID-19, meetings may have number limits applied. Members will be kept informed of meeting venues and restrictions as needed.

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